



4510-24-P

**DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**

**Bureau of Labor Statistics**

**Information Collection Activities, Comment Request**

**AGENCY:** Bureau of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor.

**ACTION:** Notice of information collection, request for comment.

**SUMMARY:** The Department of Labor, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, conducts a pre-clearance consultation program to provide the general public and Federal agencies with an opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing collections of information in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995. This program helps to ensure that requested data can be provided in the desired format, reporting burden (time and financial resources) is minimized, collection instruments are clearly understood, and the impact of collection requirements on respondents can be properly assessed. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) is soliciting comments concerning the proposed revision of the "The Consumer Expenditure Surveys: The Quarterly Interview and the Diary." A copy of the proposed information collection request can be obtained by contacting the individual listed below in the Addresses section of this notice.

**DATES:** Written comments must be submitted to the office listed in the Addresses section of this notice on or before [INSERT DATE 60 DAYS AFTER PUBLICATION IN THE *FEDERAL REGISTER*].

**ADDRESSES:** Send comments to Nora Kincaid, BLS Clearance Officer, Division of Management Systems, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Room 4080, 2 Massachusetts Avenue, N.E., Washington, DC 20212. Written comments also may be transmitted by fax to 202-691-5111 (this is not a toll free number).

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Nora Kincaid, BLS Clearance Officer, at 202-691-7628 (this is not a toll free number). (See Addresses section.)

**SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

**I. Background**

The Consumer Expenditure (CE) Surveys collect data on consumer expenditures, demographic information, and related data needed by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and other public and private data users. The continuing surveys provide a constant measurement of changes in consumer expenditure patterns for economic analysis and to obtain data for future CPI revisions. The CE Surveys have been ongoing since 1979.

The data from the CE Surveys are used 1) for CPI revisions, 2) to provide a continuous flow of data on income and expenditure patterns for use in economic analysis and policy formulation,

and 3) to provide a flexible consumer survey vehicle that is available for use by other Federal government agencies. Public and private users of price statistics, including Congress and the economic policymaking agencies of the Executive branch, rely on data collected in the CPI in their day-to-day activities. Hence, data users and policymakers widely accept the need to improve the process used for revising the CPI. If the CE Surveys were not conducted on a continuing basis, current information necessary for more timely, as well as more accurate, updating of the CPI would not be available. In addition, data would not be available to respond to the continuing demand from the public and private sectors for current information on consumer spending.

In the Quarterly Interview Survey, each consumer unit (CU) in the sample is interviewed every three months over four calendar quarters. The sample for each quarter is divided into three panels, with CUs being interviewed every three months in the same panel of every quarter. The Quarterly Interview Survey is designed to collect data on the types of expenditures that respondents can be expected to recall for a period of three months or longer. In general the expenses reported in the Interview Survey are either relatively large, such as property, automobiles, or major appliances, or are expenses which occur on a fairly regular basis, such as rent, utility bills, or insurance premiums.

The Diary (or recordkeeping) Survey is completed at home by the respondent family for two consecutive one-week periods. The primary objective of the Diary Survey is to obtain expenditure data on small, frequently purchased items which normally are difficult to recall over longer periods of time.

## **II. Current Action**

Office of Management and Budget clearance is being sought for the proposed revision of the Consumer Expenditure Surveys: The Quarterly Interview and the Diary.

As part of an ongoing effort to improve data quality, maintain or increase response rates, and reduce data collection costs, CE is making the below changes.

Several changes will be implemented in the Quarterly Interview Survey including the addition of a veterans question, point of purchase or outlet questions, and two studies.

One question will be added asking whether members of the consumer unit aged 16 and over have ever served on active duty in the armed forces. The addition of this question will enable CE to publish estimates on expenditures by veteran status.

CE will continue to test the addition of outlet questions, adding in the remaining sections of the Quarterly Interview

Survey instrument. These questions will be added beginning July 2018.

CE will test the effect of providing respondents with a Spending Summary Report (SSR) on respondent cooperation and survey experience. The test will be fielded from July through September 2018 and April through May 2019. The test is designed to address response rates, which have been trending downward over the past twenty years. At the end of the 1st Interview, respondents will be offered the option to receive a SSR. Results of the field test will be used to inform the final design of the CE Gemini Redesign's use of a similar Spending Summary Report.

CE will also test the addition of a Quarterly Interview Survey Worksheet to be fielded April through May 2019 and October through December 2019. CE will evaluate both the feasibility of using this worksheet based on debriefing questions and the effect of using the worksheet on the data.

No changes will be made in Diary.

A full list of the proposed changes to the Quarterly Interview Survey are available upon request.

### **III. Desired Focus of Comments**

The Bureau of Labor Statistics is particularly interested in comments that:

- Evaluate whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information will have practical utility.
- Evaluate the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used.
- Enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected.
- Minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submissions of responses.

*Title of Collection:* The Consumer Expenditure Surveys: The Quarterly Interview and the Diary.

*OMB Number:* 1220-0050

*Type of Review:* Revision, of a currently approved collection.

*Affected Public:* Individuals or Households

Total Response Burden for the Quarterly Interview and Diary Surveys					
	Total Respondents	Frequency	Total Responses	Average Time per Response (minutes)	Estimated Total Burden
Quarterly Interview Survey	6075	4.5959	27,920	59.3897	27,636
Diary Survey	5,680	4.2007	23,860	59.9925	23,857
TOTALS	11,755	////////	51,780	////////	51,493

Comments submitted in response to this notice will be summarized and/or included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval of the information collection request; they also will become a matter of public record.

Signed at Washington, DC, this 2nd day of August 2017.

Kimberley Hill,  
Chief, Division of Management Systems